

Docket No. A2011-31

Postal Regulatory Commission

Washington, D.C. 20268-0001

NOTICE OF FILING UNDER 39 U.S.C. § 404(d)

TO THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE:

Please take notice that on July 26, 2011, the Commission received a petition for review of the Postal Service's determination to close the Minneapolis post office located in Minneapolis, North Carolina. The petition for review was filed by Ryan Carter (Petitioner) and is postmarked July 19, 2011.

This notice is advisory only and is being furnished so that the Postal Service may begin assembling the administrative record in advance of any formal appeal proceedings held upon the alleged (closing/consolidation) for transmittal pursuant to 39 CFR § 3001.113(a) (requiring the filing of the record within 15 days of the filing with the Commission of a petition for review). The Postal Service's administrative record is due no later than August 10, 2011.



Shoshana M. Grove
Secretary

Date: July 26, 2011

Attachment

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POSTAL REGULATORY

COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

A2011-31

July 18, 2011

Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington DC 20268-0001

SUBJECT: Appeal Minneapolis, NC (28652) Post Office Closure;
Docket Number: 1373330 – 28652

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to appeal the determination that has been made to close the Minneapolis Post Office located in Minneapolis, NC (28652). I believe that the proposal and determination have made using incomplete information and a disregard to the real injury to the community if the Post Office is closed. I have outlined my thoughts below.

1. The proposal writer / defender does not know the Minneapolis area and is therefore making the incorrect decision to close the Minneapolis Post Office.
 - a. The writer of the proposal used an Internet mapping site to judge distances resulting in a faulty number of miles between the Minneapolis Post Office and the Newland Post Office. There was no independent verification of the distances or roads between the two locations. The Internet mapping site probably mapped a route up a one-lane gravel road that is often impassible in the winter months. Vehicles on this road will need to sometimes back-up into wide spots in the road or pull off into ditches in order to pass even in pleasant weather. While the proposal now reflects the change to the appropriate paved route, it becomes obvious that little attention was paid to the situation here in Minneapolis. How can the proposal and ultimate decision determine that advantages outweigh the disadvantages for post office closure when the community and postal customers are not correctly understood?
 - b. In response to community concerns that the post office has the only community-accessible bulletin board / information exchange, the proposal defender responds that perhaps another business such as a general store can provide the information exchange. Minneapolis does not have a general store or any other store in the town. There is no business that the town members frequent that could serve as an information hub. Again, there is a complete lack of knowledge of Minneapolis and the surrounding area.

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- c. In response to the community concerns that the post office has the only community-accessible bulletin board / information exchange, the proposal defender responds that perhaps a church can fulfill this role. First of all, Minneapolis has three churches right in town with others nearby. Which parishioners should have access to the information? What about those who attend services away from town? What about folks who are of different faiths or folks who claim no faith? What about commercial information? (Many places of worship would not be comfortable posting business information inside the church, I imagine). What about postings or information that the church deems inappropriate? Should a church have editorial control over the community information?

It seems strange that a postal official would suggest that a religious organization could, should, or would serve the community in the same capacity of the currently open, available, secular Post Office.

- d. The proposal writer seems to insinuate that roadside mailboxes will be convenient to many in Minneapolis – including the elderly. In this vision, all the Minneapolis residents can just put up a mailbox right outside our front door. The thought is that the ease of home delivery will outweigh the effort of the trip to the Post Office.

However, many postal customers live on non-State-maintained roads or private drives and cannot get rural delivery to their houses or must be granted special permission to do so. It is disingenuous to make decisions based on the idea that current postal patrons will be able to just put up a mailbox near their front door and have the reliable carrier bring the mail to them. It will not work that way for everyone. Instead, lines of mailboxes and tire-track pulloffs are likely to scar the once-clear main highway through town. Meanwhile, the convenience of home delivery will not be realized by many patrons.

- e. In response to the community concern of mailbox security, the proposal writer / defender claims that “customers may place a note in their mailboxes instructing the carrier to sound their horn when they arrive, in order to transact financial business.” However, many local postal customers cannot get such special services from the rural carrier if they need to speak with him or her. It is an almost comical part of the proposal / decision document that a postal customer that desires special services from a rural carrier can leave a note in his or her mailbox and have the driver sound the horn. Poor insight into the area leads to this gross misunderstanding of how this would really work. As mentioned above, many of the Minneapolis Post Office customers do not live on State-maintained roads. Many of us live up private drives that would place us out of sight (and earshot) of a route carrier’s vehicle. Since customers must ask for exceptions to get rural delivery on non-State-maintained roads, the “honk-by” will have no practical application for some customers. In fact, this stop-and-honk solution (given as response to a couple of customer concerns in the original proposal, by the way) is simply ludicrous for a number of patrons.
2. There will be a damaging loss of the community hub. The Post Office is currently the central point of our small community. It is the first place that you go when you dig out from a snowstorm. It is the place in which neighbors encounter one another and catch up. It is the

landmark by which directions are given. While qualities such as these are somewhat intangible and do not show up on a revenue spreadsheet, they underscore why the loss of the Post Office very much feels like the stopping of the community's heartbeat.

3. I am actually curious to know when the annual savings figures were obtained. The proposal / decision document does not indicate that these are the most recent annual figures, but I am assuming that in order to use them to justify closing a post office that they would represent the actual cost numbers for 2010 and not some theoretical situation. The proposal itself states that an OIC has been installed to operate the office – not a Postmaster. Yet, the costs / savings in salary and benefits are given for a Postmaster. If these numbers are indeed for a Postmaster and not an OIC, there are some slight-of-hand machinations taking place to paint a picture of expenses / savings that just are not there.

Realistically speaking, the benefits of this proposal are not to the postal patrons. Not one person surveyed thought that this proposal was a good idea (original proposal, page 1). In fact, it should speak volumes that Minneapolis has 299 registered voters (Avery County Board of Elections website, retrieved July 2011) and the petition that was submitted to keep the office open had 272 signatures (final determination document, page 1).

The benefit that is really being sought is to balance a spreadsheet. Instead of the theater of this entire preordained process, a one sentence proposal would have been more honest: "We want to close the Minneapolis Post Office because it does not make enough money."

You can see this in the padding found throughout the proposal and decision. Among the so-called benefits listed in these documents is that "customers opting for carrier service will have 24-hour access to their mail" and "CBUs can offer the security of individually locked mail compartments". This is simply filler in the decision to make it look altruistic. The Minneapolis Post Office patrons currently have the benefits of round-the-clock mail access and locked mail compartments.

While the benefits of the proposal and decision are padded, the disadvantages given in these documents are understated. I do not believe that this decision really comprehends or acknowledges the needs of postal patrons of Minneapolis. Good customer service comes from knowledge of the customers. A single brief meeting held in the middle of a workday and a review of revenue statistics do not suffice for understanding the needs of a community.

Therefore, I am respectfully appealing to you to prevent the closing of the Minneapolis, NC Post Office. I strongly believe that the closure of the Post Office will provide irreparable harm to mail services and damage to the community.

Thank you for your time,

Ryan Carter

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